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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 000172

SIPDIS

TO PEACE CORPS

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SUBJECT: BANGLADESH ARMY CHIEF ACKNOWLEDGES NEED TO IMPROVE  
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: DHAKA 106

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Chief of Army Staff General Moeen told the visiting head of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security (APCSS) that the civil-military relationship in Bangladesh required improvement. APCSS Director LTG (Ret.) Ed Smith replied that developing proper civil-military relations was a challenge for all countries. He suggested that Bangladesh could send civil-military delegations to APCSS for coursework that would help them better work together on disaster management and other issues.

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CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP NEEDS IMPROVEMENT  
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¶2. (C) Since winning independence in 1971, Bangladeshi politicians and military leaders have lived uneasily with one another. The young democracy's brief history has included military rule and unelected civilian governments backed by the military. Although Bangladesh recently concluded a peaceful transfer of power from a military-supported Caretaker Government to an elected government, few efforts are underway to address the underlying causes of civil-military tension in Bangladesh (reftel). The Hasina government is still grappling with that issue.

¶3. (C) In a February 2 meeting, Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff General Moeen Uddin Ahmed told LTG (Ret.) Smith the civil-military relationship in Bangladesh needed to be improved by bringing both sides together through ongoing education such as that provided by APCSS. LTG (Ret.) Smith told Gen Moeen that the trend in U.S. military schools was to increase the number of civilian participants to as much as one-third total participants to create a more conducive environment for exchanges of ideas. Ambassador Moriarty stressed to Gen Moeen the need to get civilians involved with the military to help "demystify" the two cultures.

¶4. (C) Gen Moeen said the military-run Bangladesh National Defence College already offered seven hours of disaster management that included instruction on how to work effectively with civilians. He added that the Bangladesh military did not have enough resources to address all types of disasters in Bangladesh (i.e. cyclone, earthquake, etc.), making further improvements in civilian-military relations of utmost import. LTG (Ret.) Smith explained that politicians

who took APCSS courses learned about the military culture and vice versa, which helped both sides work together when disaster strikes.

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COMMENT: THE U.S. CAN HELP  
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15. (C//NF) Though the December 29 Parliamentary election was a success, the military influence on the prior Caretaker Government and the politicians' suspicions regarding the military's intent cast a shadow over the current civil-military relationship. Improving the relationship is critical to Bangladesh's future political stability and therefore in the USG interests. Confidence building measures are a critically needed first step. APCSS courses can play an important role in such confidence building, and Post will work with LTG (Ret.) Smith to design programs that will help improve civilian control over the military in Bangladesh.  
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